

Office of the Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan

A report from your County Attorney

August, 2010

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About us:

The Harris County Attorney is the civil lawyer Harris County, elected officials, and many other governmental entities. We authorized by law to:

- Use civil enforcement to protect neighborhoods, up environment, and shut down illegal enterprises;
- Protect children and the elderly through representation of state and county agencies;
- Defend Harris County when lawsuits are filed against it;
- Pursue claims and collects revenue when County the money; Advise elected officials,
- department heads, and others.

Who we represent:

Our office is the first County Attorney's Office in the State of Texas to be created solely to serve a major urban county's civil law needs. represent not only Harris County but other entities that operate within Harris County, including County Harris Hospital District, the Harris County Flood Control District, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, the Greater Emergency Network.

Our 94 lawyers and 101 staff support are

Our Organization:

organized into nine divisions: Compliance Division

Employment Division

Environmental Division General Counsel Division **Hospital District Division** Protective Division Real Property Division **Special Prosecutions Unit Trial Division** OUR MISSION

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE

HARRIS COUNTY

Attorney's Office, both LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES. **Useful Links: Harris County Appraisal District**

Toll Road Authority

Voter Registration/Tax Office Flood Control District



Abuse Hot-line 1-800-252-5400 **Guardianship Program** 713-363-2300

Veterans Services

713-696-1992

713-755-5243

Crime Stoppers 713-222-TIPS **Hospital District Eligibility** 713-566-6509

713-566-6509

Nuisance Abatement

"Of Service to All, According to Law" is our unofficial office motto and we have been working to live up to it. We want you to know about some of our recent accomplishments that will make a difference in your lives.

Film: Dog Fighting: Cruelty in the Heart of Texas We



working with are enforcement, prosecutors, community leaders, and animal protection organizations combat dog fighting in Texas. Our office has produced an antidog fighting video entitled, Dog Fighting: Cruelty in the Heart of Texas to bring attention to the danger and cruelty of this blood

sport. The video promotes responsible pet ownership and nonviolent alternatives to dog fighting. Vince has formed a Special Prosecutions Unit, headed by Assistant County Attorney Linda Geffin, to investigate incidents of animal cruelty and to take legal action to remove animals from inhumane conditions. Caution there are disturbing images depicting dog fighting and cruelty to animals. Click here to view the film. . Fighting Polluting Companies



Our office requested that a receiver be appointed to take over the assets of international businessman Klaus Gennsler and several of his companies. Court documents filed by the County Attorney show that these companies have been storing thousands of gallons of hazardous and flammable waste in leaking containers along Vince Bayou in Pasadena, Texas. District Judge Kyle Carter granted the request. The receiver will use the assets of the companies to identify the wastes and dispose of them at an approved facility.

Protecting Children

The County Attorney's Protective Services Division provides legal representation to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Last year the Office of the County Attorney filed over 3,700 cases to protect abused and neglected children in Harris County. Debbie Dillard, Community Outreach Director, and Estella

Olguin Community, Relations Director for Childrens Protective Services, worked with SMG-Reliant Park, to obtain circus tickets to permit foster parents and foster children to attend the Ringling Bros. Circus. CPS currently has 5,000 children in custody in Harris County, 50% of them under the age of 10.

The Texas Health and Human COMMUNITY Services Commission has been ordered

Helping Hospital District HMO Collect from State

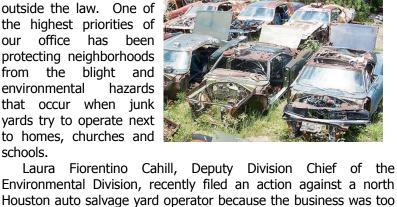
to pay \$249,999.00 to the Harris County Hospital District's HMO for medical expenses incurred in the treatment of a newborn child. The State Office of Administrative Hearings found the Commission to be in breach of its contract with the HMO.



Assistant County Attorney Nancy Wingstrom represents the HMO, Community Health Choice, Inc., which is owned and operated by the Harris County Hospital District. Cleaning up Salvage Yards Hundreds of salvage

operate through out Harris County, some,

outside the law. One of the highest priorities of office has been protecting neighborhoods the blight and hazards environmental that occur when junk yards try to operate next to homes, churches and schools. Laura



close to a residential neighborhood, was improperly storing wrecked vehicles, and had allowed soil to become contaminated with lead. Harris County Commissioners Court authorized the Office of the County Attorney to take action against other salvage yards that violate health and safety laws and ignore state law. **Collecting Phone Company Overcharges** Our office filed suit seeking to recover over \$2 million on behalf of the Harris Hospital District AT&T/ County from

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. The



suit claims that the phone company fraudulently collected "municipal charges" from the Hospital District in violation of state law and ordinances adopted by numerous cities in Harris County. alleges that from 1991 through February Bell improperly assessed and collected "municipal charges" from Harris County Hospital District and other Warning: San Jactino Waste Pits

public the

been working with the EPA to warn the about dangers of eating fish in the area of the San Jacinto Waste Pits, partially submerged superfund site in the San Jacinto River. During the late 1960s, pits next to the river were filled dioxin-laden paper waste from a nearby paper mill.

Over time, due to



subsidence, local the San Jacinto River flowed into and through these pits spreading dioxin, one of the deadliest chemicals in the world. The EPA has ordered the responsible parties to immediately contain the remaining waste on-site and to work on a long-term solution. Snehal Patel, Environmental Regulatory Section Chief, has been working with the Public Infrastructure Department, Commissioner Sylvia Garcia's office, and Public Health and Environmental Services on this project.